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AUTHOR Hult, Christine
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ABSTRACT

A college English professor applied for and received a grant to equip a 20-station networked computer classroom designed to provide a site for state-of-the-art pedagogy in teaching English using computers. The networked computer classroom has two related goals: to provide a setting for the preservice and inservice training of English and language arts teachers who will be teaching in the public schools; and to serve as a site for theory-building in the use of computers for English studies. Networking personal computers into a text-sharing arrangement is one of the important distinctions of an English computer classroom: it allows real-time editing, and gives students unparalleled opportunities to participate in the work in progress, facilitating collaboration in previously unheard of ways. Several courses have proven important in helping teachers to be more effective computer users themselves and in helping them to learn how to use computers in English (including an introductory course, collaboration between a preservice basic writing teaching course and a course for basic writers, inservice courses, and desktop publishing courses). The computer classroom is also important for using computers to teach writing, literature, and desktop publishing and book production. (RS)

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COMPUTERS IN SUPPORT OF TEACHER TRAINING

In our state, as in many others, there has been a push toward introducing technology into the public schools. Some of this thrust is based on the wrong-headed notion that technology will somehow replace teachers and make schools more "efficient." I recall one administrator looking forward to the time when computers would "correct" all student writing so teachers wouldn't have to. Whatever the motivation, however, school districts are finding themselves with computer writing labs, but are too often unprepared to use them effectively.

When I consult with public schools in my area, I frequently see English teachers sending their kids to the computer lab expecting the lab assistant, if there is one, to "teach" the students to use computers and to provide technical guidance in word processing. Because the English teachers don't know how to use the technology themselves, they are fearful of providing necessary instruction. Kids get little or no direction and so end up using the computers as nothing more than super-typewriters to produce their English papers. One of the major problems we have in English education is helping teachers to learn the technology themselves, but beyond that, helping them to see how to integrate the technology into the school curriculum in educationally meaningful ways.

Using our state's interest in educational technology, I applied for and received a grant to equip a 20 station networked

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computer classroom designed to provide a site for state-of-the-art pedagogy in teaching English using computers. The networked computer classroom has two related goals: 1) to provide a setting for the preservice and inservice training of English and language arts teachers who will be teaching in the public schools, and 2) to serve as a site for theory-building in the use of computers for English studies. We are now providing teachers with a networked classroom setting in which the newest techniques and programs for improving English instruction can be developed and demonstrated in a tightly orchestrated class arrangement.

It is a truism in the profession that student writers benefit by collaborating with each other and with their teacher as they are writing. Networking personal computers into a text-sharing arrangement is one of the important distinctions of an English computer classroom. It allows real time editing, and gives the students unparalleled opportunities to participate in the work in progress, facilitating collaboration in previously unheard of ways.

In our networked classroom, students, as they are writing, are uploading their work to the server's database, sending mail messages asking for peer and teacher critique, responding to each other's writing using a split screen, sending off their papers and receiving the responses of others on the network, all conveniently and simultaneously. The Daedalus Instructional system and the other software that we are using provide for a networked classroom that is a model for a complete teaching unit

that may be imitated by teachers in the public schools.

Courses in the Networked Classroom

Several courses have proven important in helping teachers to be more effective computer users themselves and also helping them to learn how to use computers in English. The introductory course in this block of courses is called "Computers in Composition." This course serves to acquaint prospective teachers, as well as other students on our writing track, with what we currently know about how computers can help writers, providing them with practice in the networked classroom themselves in a hands-on methods course using collaborative writing.

We offer another exciting collaborative experience for freshmen students taking our Basic Writing course (001) and the prospective teachers in the Teaching Basic Writing course (405). These two student groups collaborate by sharing texts on the network. The 405 students are serving as "computer writing tutors" for the basic writers enrolled in 001. Both groups benefit tremendously by virtue of this collaboration, something made possible by the network technology. Other courses offered include a graduate seminar in "Computers and English Studies" for inservice teachers in the area. This course is an innovative look at network pedagogy in all areas of English studies, including interactive fiction and reader response to literature. Another graduate seminar trains graduate students to use the

network technology in teaching basic writers.

The computer classroom is used for classes that instruct teachers in desktop publishing and document design. Teachers increasingly find themselves in situations where they need to produce polished documents for presentation to the public, including fliers, newsletters, grant proposals, curriculum guides, and so on. Not only do they need to teach their students to use computers to improve writing skills, but the teachers need to learn how to use computers to design and produce documents and to publish their students' work using desktop publishing. An ongoing project for our students provides for internships in English to write, design, and produce through desktop publishing departmental and college newsletters. Course work in document design and in text production also helps students become conversant with document production.

In the summer, we use our computer classroom as a site for in-service training of teachers from throughout the state. Workshops for teachers are being offered as a way of acquainting practicing teachers with the newest ideas for using computers to teach English and language arts, ideas that we hope they will carry back to their own school districts.

Diverse Areas of English Studies

As is clear from the course descriptions mentioned, we see the computer classroom as important for preservice and inservice teachers to use computers effectively in writing, but also in

other important areas of English studies:

1) **Using computers to teach writing.** Teachers using the computer classroom learn that computers are not just super-typewriters but can support the writing process at all stages: prewriting, writing, and rewriting. They discover and practice using "invention" software (such as MindWriter) that helps students discover and organize their ideas before writing. Similarly, teachers learn about "revision" software (such as Descant or Writer's Helper) that helps students revise their work, making it more concise, less wordy, more correct. Teachers also learn how to use writing networks for text-sharing and collaborative learning.

2) **Using computers to teach literature.** Teachers using the computer classroom learn about computers in other areas of English studies, including literature. Software such as SEEN helps students to respond to literature and to write literary analysis papers. Interactive fiction and hypertext programs introduce students to new ways in which literary texts are being written and read. Class discussion groups and reader-response journals are posted on the network and shared by classmates.

3) **Using computers for desktop publishing and book production.** Teachers become familiar with principles of document design, formatting and production by using the computer classroom. Technology is radically changing our conception of "text" and "textuality." Students in English education need to be aware of the impact of technology on their field, including

the ways in which book development and design are radically changed by desktop publishing.

In discussions of computers in English, it is clear that the one constant factor is change. Computers have changed and will continue to change the way we write and the way we teach writing. But they will also be influential in changing our entire notion of what it means to be an English teacher and what an English classroom looks like. We need to pay considerably more attention to how student teachers are prepared to face the future as computer-literate, in the best sense of the term, writers and teachers.